

— T H E —  
**BETTER ANGELS**  
— S O C I E T Y —



ANNUAL REPORT

**TELLING AMERICA'S STORIES**



# LETTER FROM THE BETTER ANGELS SOCIETY

## Dear Better Angels Donors and Friends,

The Better Angels Society is pleased to provide you with this report on the important work of telling America's stories through the lens of Ken Burns and other documentary filmmakers.

**Our mission to educate, engage, and provoke thoughtful discussion among people of every political persuasion and ideology** could not be more important than it is today. We believe we have a unique brand that can reach millions of people, across all sectors and ages, and educate generations on what it means to be an American.

Over 50 million people watched the 18-hour documentary series *The Vietnam War*, which Ken Burns and Lynn Novick worked on for over a decade. The film had unprecedented outreach, public engagement, and educational impact thanks to our Better Angels.

Thanks to generous funding from David Rubenstein, we are continuing the dialogue through Ken Burns UNUM, an interactive digital platform using clips from Ken's complete film library to explore US history and provide context to current events and issues.

The Better Angels Society is made up of citizens from across the country and across the political spectrum who make a significant commitment to ensuring that America's stories continue to be told, so that we — and future generations — can better understand who we are as a people.

On these two pages you'll find photos of The Better Angels Society Board of Directors, donors, and special friends. Convening in Brooklyn for our spring meeting this year, we walked over the Brooklyn Bridge, the subject of Ken's first documentary. We also gathered at the Brooklyn Library for a panel discussion and sneak peek of *College Behind Bars*, which is airing on PBS in 2019, along with the documentary series *Country Music* and *East Lake Meadows: A Public Housing Story*. By contributing toward production costs and educational platforms that enhance impact, our Better Angels help make it possible for these films to be available to all — and enlighten our democracy.

Thank you to all who have contributed to this important work. As we look to the next ten years of an ambitious film schedule and goals to increase our reach through the next generation of filmmakers and broader educational opportunities, we are grateful for your continued support and participation.

Amy Margerum Berg  
President, The Better Angels Society

Bobby Stein  
Chairman, The Better Angels Society



Darlene Moultrie, Ron Moultrie, Wes Caines, David Kreisman



Laura Roosevelt, Patricia Walker



Eden Rafshoon, Ken Burns, Michelle Smith



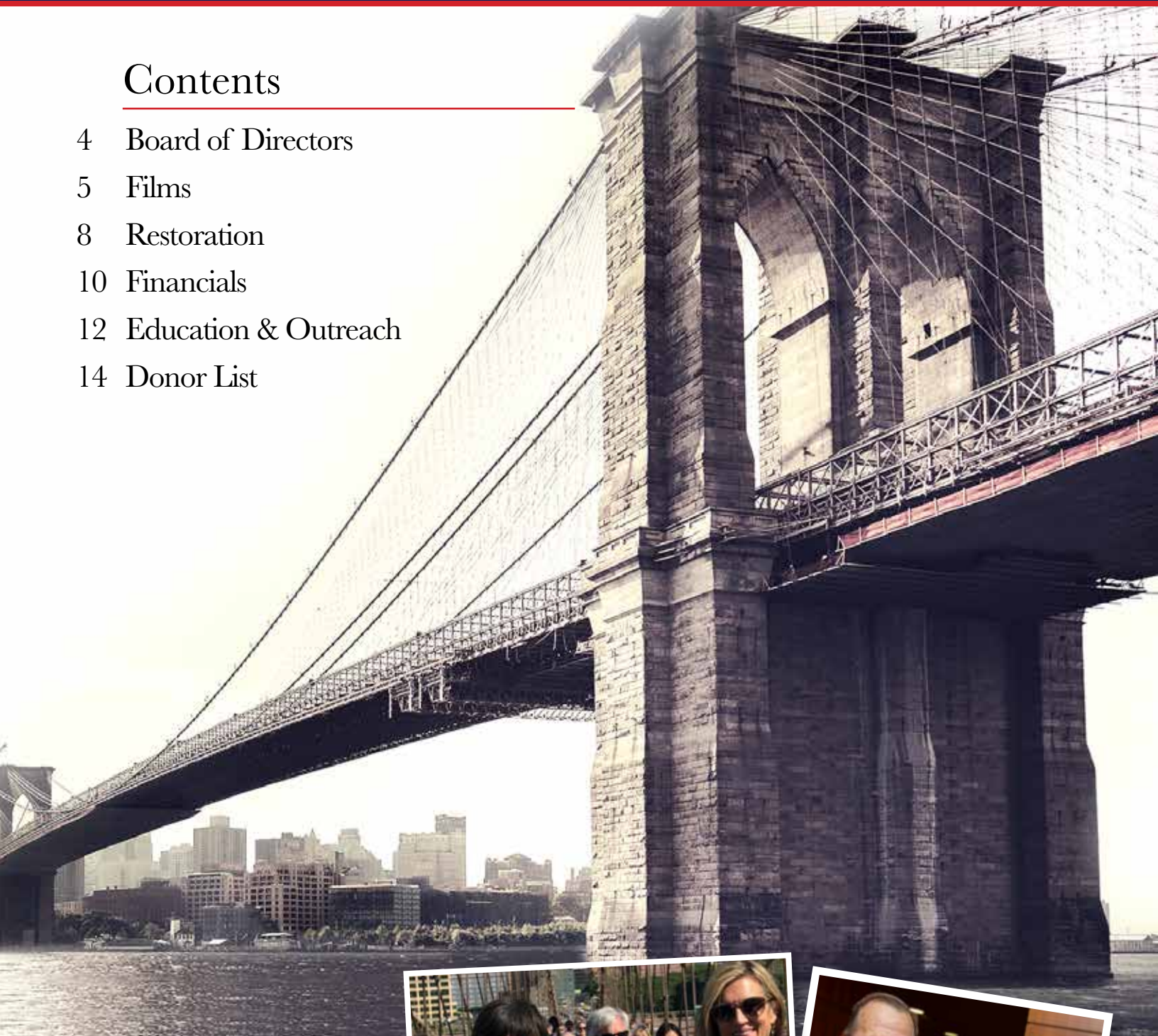
Charlie Hellman, Greg Golkin



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*Bobby Stein, Walter Isaacson, Phil Kent*



*Ken Burns, Polly Stein*



*Admiral Mike Mullen, Ken Burns*



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## OUR MISSION

The Better Angels Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating Americans about their history through documentary film.



Ken Burns, Jule Hall, Max Kenner, Lynn Novick, and Wes Caines discussing College Behind Bars in Brooklyn, NY

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# The Mayo Clinic: Faith — Hope — Science

Airing nationally September 2018 on PBS, *The Mayo Clinic* is not just the story of one American health care institution. From its rural, 19th century hospital roots to today — treating over one million patients per year — this international medical center serves as a case study for a model of care that informs our national conversation on health.

*Executive produced by Ken Burns. Directed by Burns, Erik Ewers, and Christopher Loren Ewers*



*The Mayo Clinic: Faith — Hope — Science by Ken Burns, Erik Ewers, and Christopher Loren Ewers*

## INSPIRING A HEALTH CARE DISCUSSION: A CHAT WITH JAY ALIX

### ***What motivated you to support The Mayo Clinic so generously?***

It was an easy decision — I love Ken's work. I think Ken is America's storyteller. Like Ken, Mayo has excellence woven into everything it does. When you combine the nation's finest medical institution with its best documentarian, you have a winning proposition.

### ***What impact do you anticipate this film having on viewers and the health care community?***

We will all be patients at some point, so getting health care right is of great interest for all of us as individuals and for American society in general. This means everyone who has a chance to watch this film will be interested and engaged on a very personal level. When the world can see how medicine works when it is done right through an unbiased, balanced film, it means that more regions, more people, will demand the life-changing benefits of good medical care.

### ***What aspects of the film do you think the average PBS viewer might find surprising or unexpected?***

First, the extraordinary collaboration and teamwork that is an integral part of the Mayo culture, part of its DNA. Second,

medical miracles: Amazing science and what looks like some hopeless situations being reversed are beautifully revealed in the film. And third, true examples of humanity at its best.

### ***One might argue that documentary film is not an obvious target for philanthropy; tell us why you think it makes a lasting mark on society.***

People learn and share information now primarily through the moving image — I can see no better medium for inspiring people and broadening their perspectives. Also, our democracy has always been encouraged by civic discourse. This film will give us a much-needed opportunity to have an informed conversation about what we want, what we need, and what is reasonable to expect from our relationship with health care. My hope is that it will play a role in setting us on the best course forward.



*Better Angel Jay Alix*

## Country Music

*Country Music* is an eight-part, 16-hour documentary that chronicles the history of a uniquely American art form, rising from the experiences of everyday people. From southern Appalachia's songs of struggle, heartbreak, and faith to the rollicking western swing of Texas, from California honky-tonks to Nashville's Grand Ole Opry, we follow the evolution of country music over the course of the 20th century, as it became America's music. Like the award-winning film *Jazz*, this multi-episode series focuses on the fascinating characters who created this musical genre — the Carter family, Jimmie Rodgers, Bob Wills, Bill Monroe, Hank Williams, Loretta Lynn, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Emmylou Harris, Garth Brooks, and many more — as well as the times in which they lived. Throughout, we explore larger historical and cultural questions: Where did country music come from? How does it relate to other genres of popular music? How did it both reflect and influence American culture in the 20th century? And like the music itself, *Country Music* will tell unforgettable stories of the hardships and joys of ordinary people.

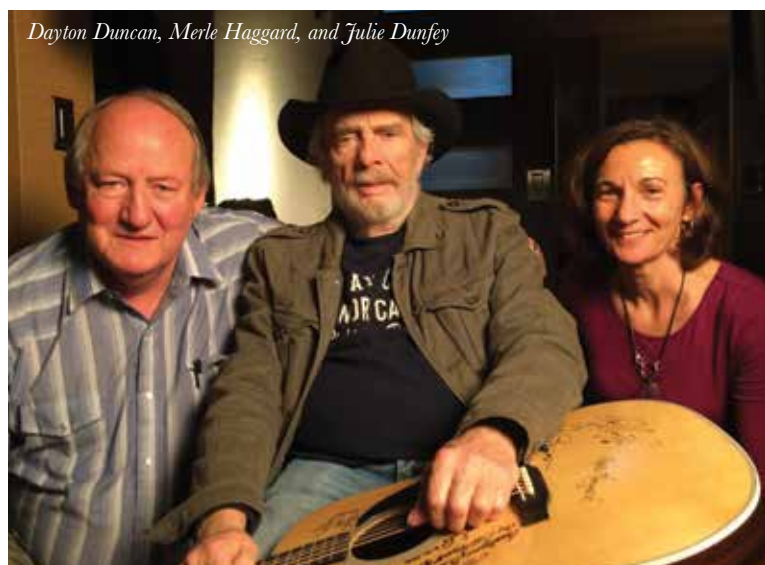
*Directed by Ken Burns, written by Dayton Duncan, and produced by Ken Burns, Dayton Duncan, and Julie Dunfey*



*Patsy Cline at the Grand Ole Opry*

## Producers' Note: Country Music

Six years ago, we began work on *Country Music*. For Dayton — whose first public performance was singing a Marty Robbins song in an Iowa church basement when he was eight years old — it was a chance to



*Dayton Duncan, Merle Haggard, and Julie Dunfey*

dig deeper into a music he has loved for a long time. For Julie — and most of the other people at the editing house in Walpole—it was an opportunity to be immersed in something new. (And now she loves it, too.)

After conducting more than 100 interviews, collecting more than 100,000 still images and hundreds of hours of archival footage, and after spending nearly two years editing and refining the story, our talented team reached a milestone in late June when we “locked” the film. Next comes the finishing: adding sound effects, inserting the master images and footage, securing music rights, and completing all the other details necessary to deliver the final version to PBS in January 2019, well in advance of a fall 2019 national broadcast.

We hope that those who see *Country Music* will have the same range of experiences we had in making it. For some, it will be a welcome reminder of the great songs and great artists from their past. For even more people, it will be an introduction to a vital part of America's cultural heritage that they will love getting to know.

*Dayton Duncan and Julie Dunfey, producers*

## THE VIETNAM WAR by the numbers

In 2017, THE VIETNAM WAR reached over **52 million** viewers.

This includes over **13 million** digital streams of all 10 episodes.



## College Behind Bars

*College Behind Bars*, a four-hour documentary series, tells the story of a small group of incarcerated men and women in New York State struggling to earn degrees and turn their lives around in one of the most rigorous and effective prison college programs in America — the Bard Prison Initiative. Through their experiences, filmed over four years in medium and maximum security prisons, the film shines a light on the fundamental relationship between incarceration and education, puts a human face on America's criminal justice crisis, and upends conventional wisdom about the human potential for moral, emotional, and intellectual transformation. The film raises questions we urgently need to address: What is prison for? Who has access to educational opportunity? Who among us is capable of academic excellence? How can we have justice without redemption? The film is slated for release in 2019.

*Directed by Lynn Novick and produced by Sarah Botstein, Salimah El-Amin, Mariah Doran, and Novick, College Behind Bars is a production of Skiff Mountain Films in association with Florentine Films. Ken Burns is Executive Producer.*



## East Lake Meadows: A Public Housing Story

In October 1970, the Atlanta Housing Authority opened a public housing community on the edge of the city called East Lake Meadows. Over the next 25 years, many thousands of low-income Atlantans, mostly African American, would call it home. Residents moved in for hundreds of different reasons and created strong bonds despite the many challenges they faced. But as public housing in America became increasingly stigmatized and abandoned, and a crack wave swept through the neighborhood, East Lake Meadows became nearly uninhabitable. In the mid-1990s, the city bulldozed East Lake Meadows to make way for new mixed-income housing, as government and philanthropic funds poured into the area in an effort to create a thriving community. Through the stories of the former residents of the housing project, *East Lake Meadows: A Public Housing Story* gives voice to some of the most marginalized people in our society and raises critical questions about how we have concentrated poverty and limited housing opportunities for African Americans, and what can be done to address it.

*Presented by Ken Burns. Directed and produced by Sarah Burns and David McMahon.*



## Films in Production

- **Hemingway (2020)**
- **Ali (2021)**
- **The Holocaust and the United States (2021)**
- **LBJ and Civil Rights (2023/'24)**

## Proposed Future Films

- **Benjamin Franklin (2022)**
- **The American Buffalo (2024)**
- **Leonardo da Vinci (2025)**
- **The American Revolution (2026)**
- **History of Crime and Punishment in America (2027)**
- **Emancipation to Exodus (2028)**



*The original negative is assessed, repaired, and cleaned.*

## Why support the restoration of a Ken Burns film?

Young generations of viewers have a higher expectation of the quality of films they see today. Even a common smartphone has three times the resolution of televisions from just 15 years ago.

Restoring Ken Burns's early films to HD will introduce them to a whole new audience and ensure their survival for many generations to come. These films provide a historical context that we hope the younger generations of today and the future will be able to access and see clearly.

When Ken's films from 1980 to 2001 were originally broadcast, they were all created for Standard Definition. These early films were shot on 16mm film, which is inherently high definition and can now be scanned in Ultra High Definition 4K — five times the resolution in which they are currently viewed.



*Reassembling the edit matching the original broadcast*

The new version will also have 10 percent more image area on the sides of the image (which was cropped in the early versions for the square TVs of the time). The result, according to *The Washington Post*, can be “a much clearer, and in some cases more nuanced, movie.”

The 4K digital version will be archived for long-term storage in multiple locations, and the HD version will be provided to PBS for broadcast and re-release.

Restoration is made possible only through the gifts of private individuals, who receive credit on the restored version. When newly restored films are rebroadcast on PBS and re-released on multiple streaming and digital platforms, it creates a whole new buzz. Educators will reconsider them as a method for teaching. Donors supporting a digital restoration have their name on the credit for perpetuity. What better legacy could one leave for supporting this important and meaningful effort?

### THREE STEPS TO RESTORING OLD FILM

- 1 The original negative is assessed, repaired, and cleaned.
- 2 The edit is reassembled to match the original broadcast.
- 3 The new digital version is stabilized, dust and scratches removed, and new color applied.



## Brooklyn Bridge

The digitally remastered version of Ken Burns's *Brooklyn Bridge* premiered at a sold-out special event at the Brooklyn Museum, with 400 people attending. Better Angels Maureen Jane and Mark Perry's support made possible a negative restoration and a digitization of this Academy Award-nominated first documentary. Support for the restoration resulted in new energy, new audiences, and a new appreciation for the history of the iconic bridge and its place in American life.



*A frame from the digitally restored version of Brooklyn Bridge*

## The Shakers: Hands to Work, Hearts to God

Time took its toll on *The Shakers*, and the original negative was damaged beyond repair in storage, so the team working on its restoration was painfully reminded of how vital preservation is. The documentary itself was saved in a digital format through financial support from Maureen Jane and Mark Perry. Digital-restoration software used at Technicolor NYC drastically reduced the damage to the original negative so that it is almost undetectable in the digital version, but the negative emulsion was so heavily damaged that the tangible film will never be repaired to its original state.



*Shaker sisters demonstrating dance positions in The Shakers: Hands to Work, Hearts to God*



*Frame from The Civil War before restoration*



*Restored frame demonstrates dramatically enhanced tone and detail.*

**To restore each of the following, a gift of \$200,000 per program hour is requested:**

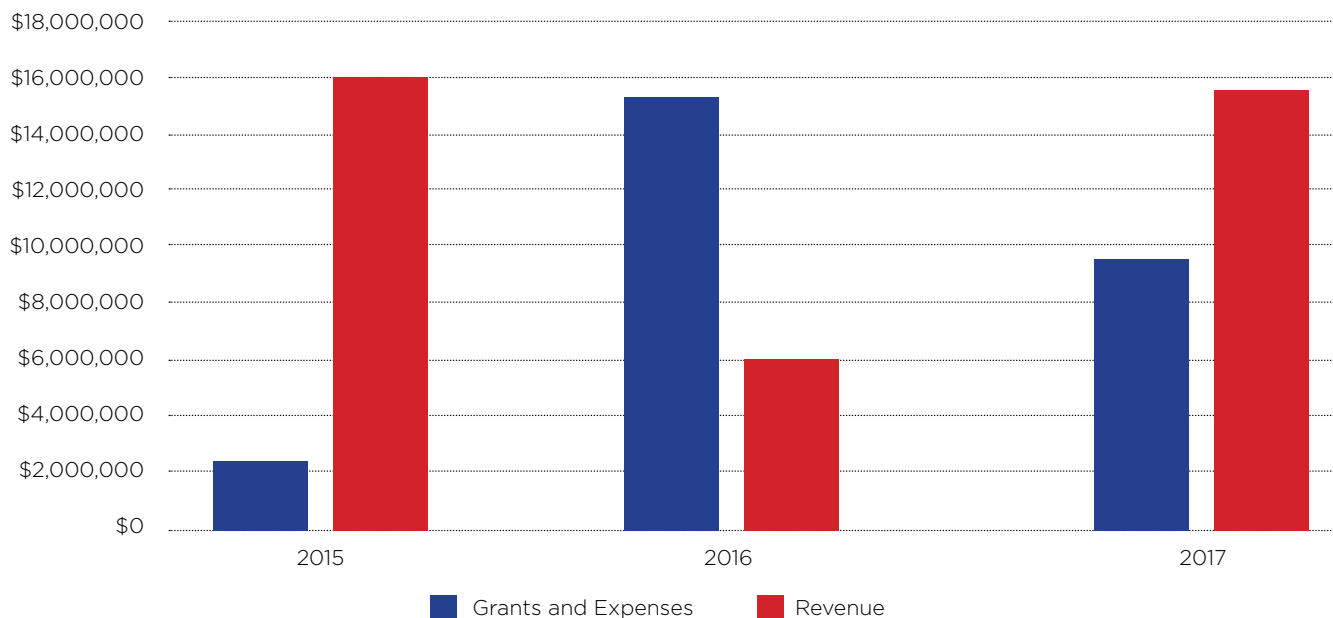
1981	Brooklyn Bridge (completed): 1 hour
1984	The Shakers: Hands to Work, Hearts to God (completed): 1 hour
1985	The Statue of Liberty: 1 hour
1985	Huey Long: 1.5 hours
1988	The Congress: 1.5 hours
1988	Thomas Hart Benton: 1.5 hours
1990	The Civil War (completed): 11.5 hours
1991	Empire of the Air: The Men Who Made Radio: 2 hours
1994	Baseball: 18.5 hours
1996	The West: 9 hours
1997	Thomas Jefferson: 3 hours
1997	Lewis & Clark: The Journey of the Corps of Discovery: 4 hours
1998	Frank Lloyd Wright: 2.5 hours
1999	Not for Ourselves Alone: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony: 3.5 hours
2001	Jazz: 19 hours
2001	Mark Twain: 5.5 hours

## FINANCIAL DATA BASED ON AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR FISCAL YEARS 2015 – 2017

	2017	2016	2015
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$15,695,096</b>	<b>\$6,013,624</b>	<b>\$16,470,604</b>
EXPENSES			
Program	\$6,623,511	\$14,992,345	\$2,175,041
Administration	\$286,907	\$153,362	\$105,510
Fundraising	\$359,271	\$184,312	\$188,300
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$7,269,689</b>	<b>\$15,330,019</b>	<b>\$2,468,851</b>
Change in net assets	\$8,425,407	\$(9,316,395)	\$14,001,753
Net assets, beginning of year	\$16,199,921	\$25,516,316	\$11,514,563
Net assets, end of year	\$24,625,328	\$16,199,921	\$25,516,316
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$24,753,792</b>	<b>\$16,220,915</b>	<b>\$25,527,522</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$128,464</b>	<b>\$20,994</b>	<b>\$11,206</b>
NET ASSETS			
Unrestricted	\$5,854,084	\$5,026,861	\$5,224,619
Temporarily restricted	\$18,771,244	\$11,173,060	\$20,291,697
<b>TOTAL NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$24,625,328</b>	<b>\$16,199,921</b>	<b>\$25,516,316</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$24,753,792</b>	<b>\$16,220,915</b>	<b>\$25,527,522</b>

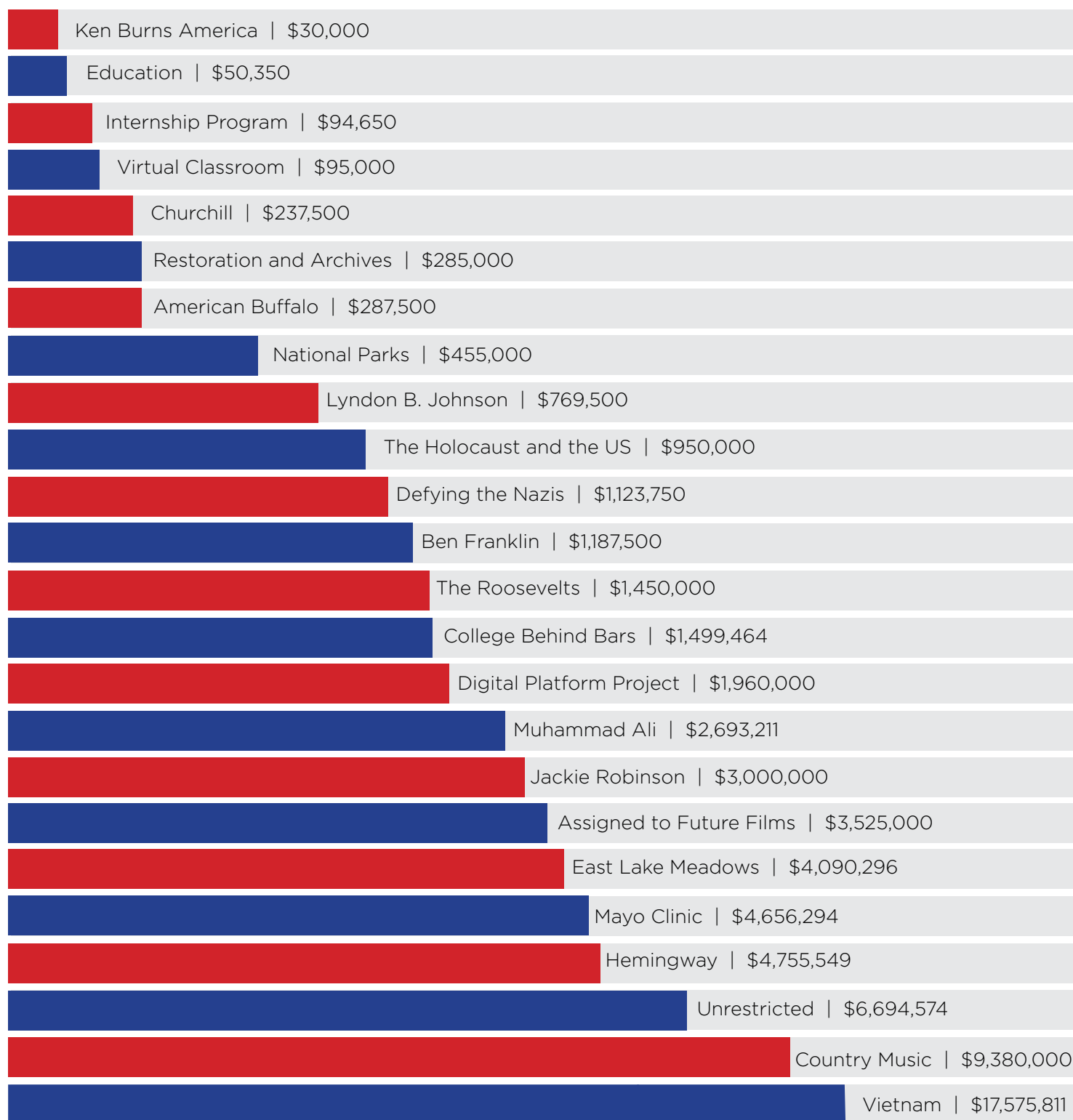
In 2017, TBAS raised \$15.6 million in contributions and grants and re-granted \$6.6 million of both current and prior years' donations. Since 2015, The Society has raised over \$38 million and made grants to support documentary film and education totaling \$18 million. The financial statements of The Better Angels Society were audited in 2017 by Raffa, Inc., and by Downey, Sweeney, Fitzgerald & Co., P.C. in 2016 and 2015.

## 2015, 2016, and 2017 Total Revenues, Total Grants and Expenses





## TOTAL MONEY RAISED TOWARD FILMS AND OTHER PROJECTS (THROUGH 6/30/2018)



### A Gift to Build More Informed, Engaged, and Aware American Students



Lynda and Stewart Resnick

*“I taught a high school literary unit on The Vietnam War for roughly 12 years, and the activities and lessons are definitely some of the best materials I’ve seen.” – Buena Vista, CO*

Thanks to the vision and generosity of Better Angels Lynda and Stewart Resnick, school-edition DVD sets and educator kits of *The Vietnam War* were sent out to almost every public high school and public charter high school in America — close to 24,000 overall — in every state. Further, PBS stations across the entire United States and US territories have helped WETA distribute thousands of DVDs to additional schools with which they work in local communities and for local teacher-training events.

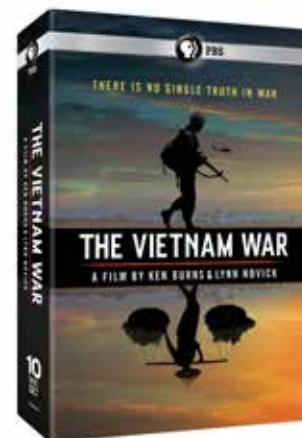
In addition to sending the DVD sets, the Resnicks’ funding made it possible for over two dozen curricular lessons and activities to be created and posted to the PBS Learning Media Ken Burns: Vietnam War collection. These materials are intended to help change the way the Vietnam War is taught in schools; they encourage teacher and student participation in the learning process in order to build more informed, engaged, and aware students.

*“This really is a great series and I appreciate the availability of the school edition. Some of my students that haven’t paid attention to much else have been glued to the segments we have watched.” – Puyallup, WA*

#### The Resnicks’ educational packages included:

A DVD set of the complete film (edited for profanity and graphic content), a film poster, a letter from Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, and a copy of *The Vietnam War Educator’s Guide for Classroom Discussion*.

Containing background information on the film, pre- and post-viewing questions, and a list of supplemental resources, the package was designed to help teachers facilitate conversations in the classroom and engage with controversial topics in a safe and respectful environment, as well as to have students reflect on the profound lessons the war teaches about courage, conscience, resilience, forgiveness, and, ultimately, reconciliation.







*Above: The new design for the Ken Burns Classroom website, [www.kenburnsclassroom.org](http://www.kenburnsclassroom.org);  
Right: Online lesson plans centered around The Vietnam War.*

## Ken Burns Classroom

Launching in fall 2018, Ken Burns Classroom will be designed, created, and marketed expressly to teachers and will combine standards-based lesson plans with:

- video clips
- infographics
- quizzes and polls
- animated shorts
- viewing questions
- trivia games
- other interactive media

These features engage users, further their experience, and garner great feedback from teachers and students as well as recognition from top education organizations.

The Classroom will feature a clean design aesthetic and user-friendly interface, with easy navigation that highlights content that is searchable and sortable by subject matter, film, or content type. Teachers will also find thematic collections, organized by historical era and curated to include all the assets they need to create and implement teaching units in their classrooms. Users will be able to create individual accounts allowing them to view, share, and download content onto their own unique pages and generate playlists, individual lesson plans, and more.

Ken Burns's films and educational resources are uniquely positioned to increase engagement of 21st century learners through compelling content and inspiring lessons. By providing educators with immersive content that also aligns with core teaching standards, the Classroom will distinguish the Ken Burns portfolio and curricula as key pieces of modern learning.

## The UNUM Digital Platform

An expansion of Ken Burns UNUM, a digital destination where users can access clips from across Ken Burns's films, launched in spring 2018, with new themes revolving around leadership, innovation, hard times, a divided nation, and art in addition to The Vietnam War. These new issues include video commentaries by figures like former New Orleans mayor Mitch Landrieu, musician Jon Batiste, commentator Glenn Beck, and author John Green.

On the home page, users will also find a new module called "Today on UNUM," which features clips from Ken's films that relate to events, anniversaries, and milestones from US history, as well as responses from contemporary voices where applicable.

As *USA Today* explained in an article on July 3, 2018, UNUM "allows users to navigate based on time period or theme to watch clips of Burns's more than two dozen documentaries on themes ranging from the Civil War and Vietnam to baseball, jazz, and the Brooklyn Bridge. These films strive for historical accuracy and avoid a political slant, letting viewers draw their own conclusion from the facts."

*Generous funding for the Ken Burns digital and educational platforms was provided by members of The Better Angels Society, including David Rubenstein, The Bezos Family Foundation, Jan and Rick Cohen, and the McManemin Family Fund of Communities Foundation of Texas.*



*The UNUM digital platform*

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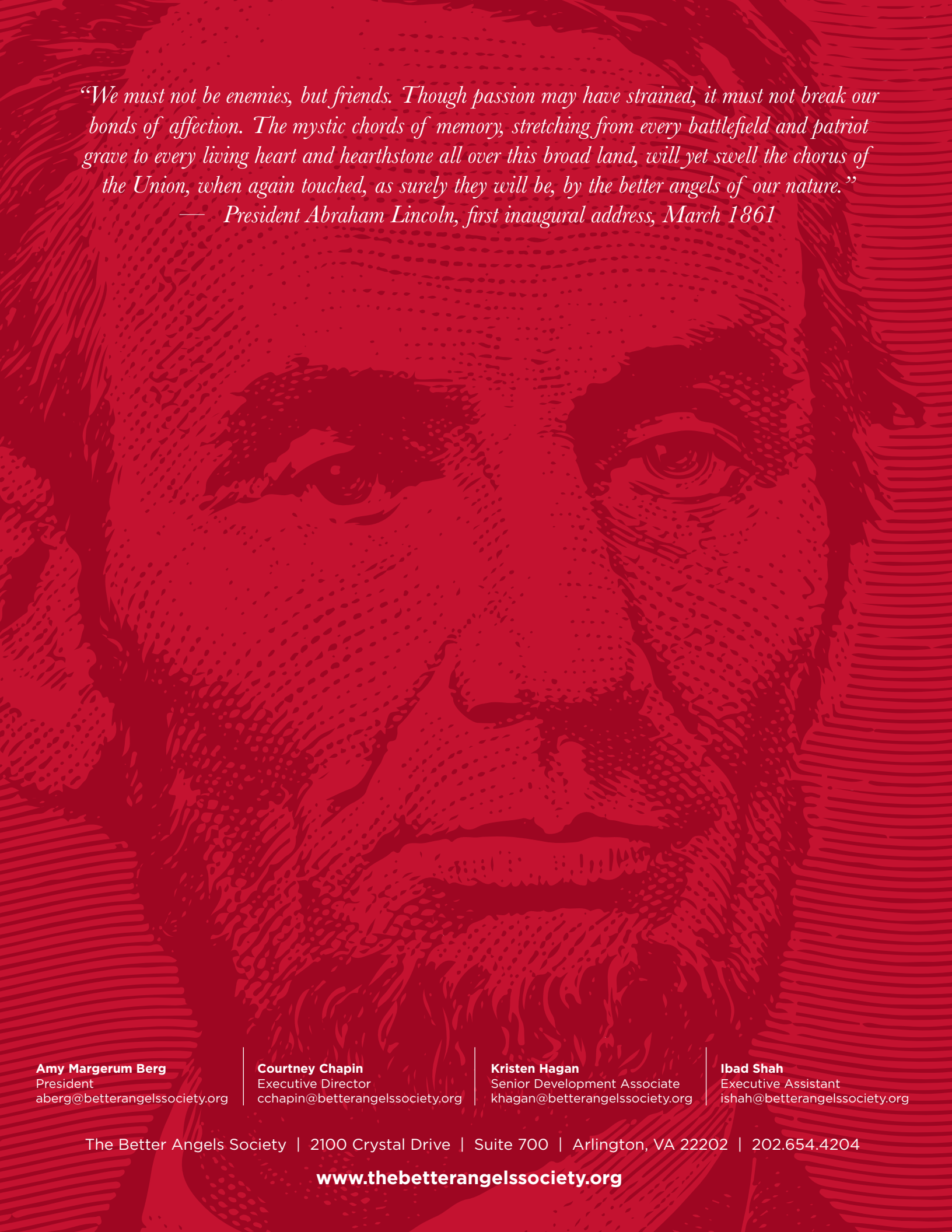
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